

Information Technology

Increasing Efficiency and Streamlining Operations

During 2000, Administrative Office staff continued to devote considerable attention to information technology initiatives aimed at moving courts toward the coming era of electronic case files; making networks faster and more secure; replacing outmoded systems; and improving planning, budget, and project management processes for information technology programs. Working

closely with the courts, the agency is helping the Judiciary harness technology to bring the courts new, more efficient ways of doing business and communicating with each other, the Administrative Office, and the public.

Y2K. Months of careful planning and preparation by the Administrative Office Y2K project team, as well as court staff,

Privacy and Public Access to Electronic Case Files

Privacy and public access to electronic case files continues to be a topic of interest to the Judiciary. Administrative Office staff conducted extensive research on this issue in 2000 and provided it to members of the Subcommittee on Privacy and Public Access to Electronic Case Files. Staff continue to monitor efforts in Congress to pass legislation dealing with electronic privacy issues as well as the efforts of state court systems. A new web site, www.privacy.uscourts.gov, was set up to detail various policy options and to encourage public comment.

paved the way for a smooth transition into the new century for the Judiciary. More than five dozen agency employees and contractors were on duty and ready to deal with potential problems January 1, 2000. A few minor problems were resolved quickly, and the roll over to the year 2000 was successful and uneventful.

Case Management/Electronic

Case Files. Over the next few years, the Administrative Office will continue a major effort to develop and implement the Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system. CM/ECF is replacing the aging existing case management systems and beginning to provide new capabilities for case filing over the Internet. Installation of CM/ECF in 14 bankruptcy courts was completed or underway by the end of 2000.

CM/ECF service will be expanded throughout federal courts in the coming years. The benefits for the courts and the public include

- New case management capabilities.
- Internet access to case file pleadings.
- Immediate docket entries.
- Immediate local or remote access from any location.
- No waiting for file room retrieval.
- No lost folders or documents.

Infrastructure. Administrative Office staff made several improvements to the Judiciary's information technology infrastructure during the year. One of those was to begin an effort to convert the Data Communications Network (DCN) to frame-relay technology. In addition to being more reliable than the leased-line network, it offers other benefits including affordable rates, improved Internet access, and better accommodation of new requirements such as the upcoming move to electronic case filing.

E-mail System Replacement. In December 1999, a contract was awarded to IBM/Lotus for the Judiciary-wide implementation of the Lotus Domino/Notes electronic mail product to replace

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the existing cc:Mail infrastructure and other e-mail systems currently installed throughout the courts. During the year, Administrative Office staff developed a detailed migration plan and contracted with an outside consultant to conduct an independent as-

E-mail System Replacement

Court staff, working at the Administrative Office e-mail project lab, prepare for the migration to the Judiciary's new e-mail system. Agency staff expect to complete the transition to Lotus Notes by October 2001.



assessment of the project's progress. Agency staff expect to complete the transition to Lotus Notes by October 2001.

Electronic Bankruptcy Noticing. Electronic bankruptcy noticing functions like a sophisticated e-mail system, eliminating the production and mailing of paper notices. It speeds public service while eliminating postage costs. In June 2000, the Judiciary began offering Internet e-mail and fax options.

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Server Backup Software. The Administrative Office completed licensing for Veritas server backup software, which provides 24-

hour-a-day call-in support. The new software, Backup Exec, provides high performance, reliable data protection for servers on the Data Communications Network. Distribution of the software to the courts was completed in September.

Computer Security. Agency staff established the Judiciary Automated Systems Incident Response Capability, which is a team

that helps courts investigate and resolve computer security incidents. A number of alerts were sent out to court systems managers during the year, which helped staff protect the Judiciary's networks and systems from viruses that affected other organizations.

Financial Accounting System for Tomorrow (FAS₄T)

FAS₄T provides the Judiciary with a single integrated financial system that meets fed-

eral accounting system standards. At the end of fiscal year 2000, FAS₄T was operating in 19 districts and one circuit court. Twenty installations are anticipated for fiscal year 2001.

Jury Management System. By the end of fiscal year 2000, 44 courts were using the Jury Management System. Nationwide implementation of the system is expected by December 2001. The automated software system performs jury management and control functions, including maintenance of databases necessary for the random selection of prospective jurors for service, daily administration of the jury process, and production of data and statistical reports.

Anti-Virus Software. A new two-year license agreement provides for software upgrades and technical support for the Norton AntiVirus products for desktops, gateways, firewalls, and file servers running the Novell and Microsoft operating systems. The contract, negotiated by Administrative Office staff, will produce savings in software acquisition costs and reduce the technical complexity of maintaining anti-virus protection. Distribution to the courts was completed in December.

Civil/Criminal Accounting Module. The Administrative Office is developing a civil/criminal accounting module that integrates with the Financial Accounting System

for Tomorrow (FAS₄T). The module will provide for the effective financial management of civil, criminal, and cash receipting activities in federal courts.

Criminal Justice Act (CJA) Panel Attorney Payment System. The CJA Panel Attorney Payment System replaces the antiquated system for payment of CJA panel attorneys and related service providers. All courts began using the new system in fiscal year 2000.

Statistical File Transfer Protocol. Administrative Office staff improved the automatic transfer of monthly statistical data from the courts. Existing automated systems were enhanced to incorporate the File Transfer Protocol feature, which enables the courts to transfer monthly statistical data from their Unix machines to the Administrative Office mainframe computer. In addition, a new mechanism for returning monthly statistical reports to the courts was put into effect. Courts now have the capability to receive automated responses immediately via e-mail.

Civil Justice Reform Act Reporting. The Civil Justice Reform Act of 1990 (CJRA) provides that data on various civil matters pending before district judges and magistrate judges must be reported to Congress. In 2000, data on Social Security appeal cases pending more than six months were added to the CJRA reports, which previously had presented data only on motions, bench trials, three-year-old cases, and bankruptcy appeals. Of the 94 U.S. district courts, 90 courts now use either the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) or some other automated means to submit their CJRA data to the Administrative

Office. All 12 circuit executives' offices now have access to the CJRA reporting system through the Web/CHASER CJRA software program.

Computer Assisted Legal Research. The Administrative Office awarded a contract extension for computer assisted legal research services to West Group for the full range of research services (legal research, newspapers and journals, and public records) and a similar extension to Lexis-Nexis for the limited contract in place for newspapers and journals services, for another four years, through September 30, 2004. Pricing arrangements under the new contract are more favorable than in the past. As a result, CALR expenditures over the next four years will be significantly less than they would if the current pricing arrangements had been extended.

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